

The Crater

By INEZ HAYNES IRWIN

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"Well, what do you think of her?" Cordelia Livingstone asked Maxwell Lee.

"I think she'll do," Maxwell answered immediately and with conviction. "She's quick, smart, practical, and efficient, but rather—rather—"

Her tone had a faint tinge of dubiety. "Colorless?" Cordelia finished her sentence for her, but with an upward inflection.

"Exactly. Almost anemic mentally, I should say—without ideas or convictions. A machine in perfect order, well oiled, ready to work. But we've got to do her thinking for her. She'll be the pawn, the buffer, and the feather-bed of this expedition."

"A typical self-respecting wage-earner," Cordelia added, "but with—"

She fixed her gaze on the porter hustling bags and suit-cases to the platform.

"Wonderful eyes?"

"Yes," Cordelia agreed. "Wonderful eyes! Haven't her comments been touching! It appears it's her first traveling. *Ma ché!* What a pig I've felt as I've watched her delight over this one little stingy trip from Boston to New York, when I think of all the years I've had in Europe and the Orient."

"I know what you mean," Maxwell agreed. "Did you notice the look in her face the other night at the Settlement when we were talking about college? Miss Nye told me afterward that it's always been her secret ambition to go to college. I'd give her those four years at Radcliffe as quick as a flash if I could."

"Here she comes now," Cordelia said. "Lorée, doesn't she look fresh? She's one of those girls who are always crisp."

The girl who was walking down the car aisle toward them was indeed what Cordelia described, "a typical self-respecting wage-earner." Shirt-waist of a white stuff that laundered easily and did not muss; blue suit of a rough cloth that cleansed easily and did not spot; small, neat black hat of materials that would longest withstand the weather; black gloves and black shoes that had been chosen for durability. She was so slim of figure as to seem almost frail, and so pale of face as to look almost sickly. The crescents of hair that showed under her hat were the color of rust. The lashes without curl, the brows without curve, were the color of rust too. The freckles that speckled her forehead, dappled her cheeks, powdered her nose, and dotted her chin were also the color of rust.

Eyelids down, she buttoned a glove with a perfectly distributed weight as she walked through the swaying car. That glove adjustment completed, she lifted her lids. It was as if stars of purple light grew in her face—as if an arrow of purple fire shot through the air. Wonderful eyes indeed! She seated herself quietly in the chair beyond the other girls. But when she glanced out of the window, it was with a gasped "Oh!" of surprise.

"New York!" said Maxwell Lee.

"New York!" said Cordelia Livingstone.

"New York!" said Kate Carroll.

"We'll be at a Hundred and Twenty-fifth Street in a moment, Miss Carroll," Maxwell informed her.

"New York!" Miss Carroll said a second time. She leaned forward and pressed her face against the pane. "It looks different from Boston," she said in a perplexed tone.

INSIDE, the impatient excitement that marks the end of a journey filled the air. The women, freshly washed, combed, and powdered, neatly hatted, veiled, and gloved, tapped impatient feet. The men, coated and gloved, but more philosophical, apathetically watched the sliding scene. The porter finished brushing and pocketed his last tip. The conductor called, "Hundred and Twenty-fifth Street." Passengers alighted. The train started again.



"There ain't much of a story to tell. I earn eight dollars a week, and I can't live on it. Besides—you see—there's Adolph."

Miss Carroll's face still pressed against the glass.

Street after street made a bee-line from the blue of one river to the blue of another. All alike, those streets; straight, symmetrical cañons cut through a rock, paved with asphalt that was worn smooth and shining, covered equally with debris and children. All alike, those houses, carved from cliffs of brownstone, retreating behind tiny yards and dragging a tail of worn brownstone steps.

"Now we're getting into the tunnel," Miss Carroll. Maxwell explained presently. "This is the most unpleasant part of the trip; but the next stop is the last."

The car darkened, slowed. Miss Carroll withdrew her gaze from without, sat upright. For a long period they ambled through a semi-opaque obscurity.

"What shall we do first, Maxie?" Cordelia Livingstone asked.

"The hotel first," Maxwell answered. "Then round to Tiffany's to get the 'Crater.'"

"Maxie, you can wear it to dinner tonight," Cordelia suggested. "Oh, I am crazy to see it."

"Cordie,"—Maxwell's tones were impressive,—it's the only piece of jewelry I've ever wanted in my life."

"We're getting into the station, Miss Carroll," Cordelia exclaimed. "There are the red-caps."

Again Miss Carroll peered out. A line of scarlet disks, topping the heads of negro porters who ran with the train, bobbed along under the window.

"Grand Central Station!" the conductor called.

Passengers gathered near the doors.

"New York!" Miss Carroll said for the third time. And she whispered. But she was quite composed an instant later when she stood up, a little traveling typewriter in one hand, a small black traveling-bag in the other, and followed the other two.

"Lord, isn't this station a wonder," Cordelia said. "I get a thrill every time I come here."

"Isn't it beautiful!" Miss Carroll said, a note of awe still whispering in her voice. "Why, it's almost like a church."

Cordelia stopped short. "It is like a church. It would be a perfectly wonderful place for a royal wedding," she announced. "Just imagine a temporary altar, enormous, gigantic, colossal, there—decorated with trees; not flowers, trees—orange trees in full blossom; the bridal party in front—there; the military and diplomatic corps back of them—there, and the guests there—and there—and there. Imagine hundreds of uniforms and evening gowns massed in those huge spaces—diamonds, rubies, emeralds, sapphires, plumes; trains of purple velvet—robes of crimson velvet—ermine—gold lace—brass buttons. My word! I'd love to plan it!"

IT is difficult to describe Cordelia Livingstone. It would be easier to say simply, "Turn back the pages of *Punch* until you come to the Du Maurier drawings." There you will come again and again on the prototypes of the glorious Trilby and the adorable Duchess of Towers, who in turn were Du Maurier's artist version of the golden Ellen Terry and the marble Lily Langtry. You will find Cordelia among them—the American version of the Du Maurier translation of the English type. In other words, she is Trilby with an American flip, the Duchess of Towers with an American tang. Slim, tall, statuesque, she stood smiling and gesturing. The smile, Du Maurier fashion, closed eyes that were like green ice filled with fire. Her gestures, as with quick, broad strokes she painted her picture, turned her arms to banners and her hands to pennants. Here and there a bystander automatically detached himself from the crowd the

better to observe that action of this beautiful human semaphore. Utterly unconscious of her audience, Cordelia suddenly ceased windmilling, fell into a brown study, and meekly followed Maxwell.

"The same old New York air!" she exclaimed joyously as she came out on the street—"a combination of champagne, electricity, and radium. Say, Miss Carroll—" She interrupted herself. "What's that—music?"

Maxwell glanced absently in the direction of Fifth Avenue. "What's going on?" she asked the red-cap.

"The suffrage parade, miss," he answered, smiling as one sure of having made a good joke.

"The suffrage parade!" Maxwell exclaimed. "I had forgotten all about that. Why, of course!"

She stood preoccupied, gazing in the direction of the Avenue.

You would have noticed Maxwell Lee anywhere, I think, first because of her figure and later because of a something in her face. The quality that made her figure noticeable was obvious enough—beauty. Towering and, in a feminine way, powerful, it was small-headed and small-waisted, slim-hipped and slim-limbed—it flared into square shoulders and tapered into slender ankles. That perfection was obviously the product of much out-of-door exercise—tennis, golf, walking, riding, swimming.

But that something in her face was a subtler problem; for it was not, in any conventional sense, beauty. Perhaps at first you might have called it breeding or poise or calm. You might have attributed it to the stillness and directness and intentness of her gaze. Thick as cream, smooth as marble, warm as a lily-petal in the sun, her skin was untouched by color except in the purple-red of the lips. This colorlessness added to the calm of her expression. The long, thick, dark lashes that fringed the clear gray eyes were perfectly straight. This straightness added to the intentness of her look. Whatever it was—that something—those who serve the public accepted it as authority. Whenever she entered a dining-room, the head waiter leaped to serve her. Telephone girls, saleswomen, waitresses accorded her a haughty deference.

THE music started again. The band struck up "I Love You, California." "That's the California delegation," Maxwell said. "See, there's the bear-flag." Her eyes followed the gorgeous, gold-fringed banner meditatively. Suddenly she smiled.

The smile made an astonishing change in her. It broke up the calm of her face with glister, glimmer, gleam. The gray eyes flashed the silver light of mischief. The purple-red lips flashed the silver white of mirth. A flock of tiny hollows, too faint to be dimples, too deep to be shadows, flittered in bird-flight across her face. The smile died. The little hollows smoothed out. One realized suddenly that that something in her face was not the breeding or poise or calm of her look; it was not the stillness and intentness and directness of her gaze. It was that her face was filled with solitudes and serenities and austerities of the spirit, just as a landscape might be filled with the solitudes and serenities and austerities of the desert.

"I wonder if we'd better go first to the—" Maxwell meditated aloud. "No, it will be too long, making these crossings. Porter, check all these things and bring the checks to me. Give him your coat and umbrella!" she ordered Cordelia Livingstone. "Give him your bag and typewriter," she ordered Kate Carroll. "We're going to parade."

"Parade!" Miss Carroll gasped. "All right!" she agreed, frowning. She relinquished her burdens with reluctance.

"Parade!" Cordelia repeated. "All right!" she agreed, sparkling. She relinquished her burdens with alacrity.

"We'd better join Mrs. Belmont's dele-